



## European Rural Parliament 2015

### National report for Austria

Prepared by the Austrian "National Champions",  
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#### How the information was collected - "Bottom Up approach"

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- Two face-to-face meetings were conducted:
- On 29 May in St. Florian (Upper Austria) with 18 LAG-Managers from Upper Austria
- On 10 June in Salzburg, the Austrian "Steering Committee for LEADER-Affairs" further named as Leaderforum Austria. It will officially be grounded in autumn 2015 as the Austrian roof organisation for LEADER, Local Action Groups and Experts/People/NGO's who has special interest in rural development

A tender was created to submit themes regarding the manifesto for rural areas. Below is the text of the call for tender, sent on 12 June and was open until 26 June:

#### ***"Dear colleagues in the LEADER-areas!"***

*The "European Rural Parliament" will take place during 4-6 November in Schärding, Austria. Delegates from around 40 Countries will take part in this event. Countries taking part are invited to submit themes for rural areas. The steering committee of the ERP will prepare a "Manifesto for rural areas" from the submitted themes. This will form the basis for activities within parliament.*

#### **Call to apply for up to 5 Themes!**

*You are heartily invited to submit up to 5 themes from your new LEADER strategies. These themes can be headlines (example "Depopulation of young educated women...") or more detailed.*

#### **What will happen with your application?**

*All applications will be combined into one national paper with – if possible – 5 topics per block and a maximum of 10 pages.*

#### **Who is allowed to submit themes?**

*We advise the LAG-Managers to submit bottom up developed themes from actual local development strategies. This will legitimate the approach for a true bottom up process and will not need further discussions or extra-workshops.*

*Nevertheless all other persons, for example members of the board or project-selection committee, are invited to submit their themes.*

#### **How much time do I have for sending my themes?**

The applications should be delivered by Friday 26 June and sent to this mail-address:  
[parlament@leaderforum.at](mailto:parlament@leaderforum.at)

### **Who is the LEADER-Forum?**

*This name refers to a group of LAG manager representatives of our federal countries, also named as the Austrian LEADER subgroup. This group have been active for a few years working on Austrian themes and will also support this project.*

*Many thanks and best regards*

*Thomas Müller*

*Project manager European Rural Parliament"*

### **Who responded to the call?**

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The persons/LAGs below sent themes individually, coordinated and collected themes about one federal country or some individual LAGs:

- LAG Steirische Eisenstrasse, Gerfried Tiffner
- LAG Hügel- und Schöcklland, Heinrich-M.Rabl
- LAG Mittelburgenland and LAG Südburgenland, collected by Heidi Drucker
- LAG Steirisches Vulkanland, Michael Fend
- LAG Lipizzanderheimat, LAG Holzwelt Murau, collected by Harald Kraxner
- LAG VWB and LAG Regio-V, collected by Peter Steuerer
- LAG Bucklige Welt –Wechselnd, LAG Weinviertel Ost (NÖ12), LAG Weinviertel-Manhartsberg, LAG Moststraße, LAG südliches Waldviertel-Nibelungengau, collected by Thomas Heindl
- LAG Kitzbüheler Alpen, Barbara Loferer
- LAG Regatta, Leo Gander
- LAG Mühlviertler Kernland, Conny Wernitznig
- All 20 LAG's of Upper Austria, collected by the elected representative Susanne Kreinecker
- LAG Hochfilzen, Pillerseetal, Stefan Niedermoser

### **Which themes did the LAG's nominate?**

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Many statements were received. These indicate what rural areas need to keep in mind to be successful in their development. These blocks are sorted by the amount of inputs:

1. Economy, near supply of goods, agriculture and forestry (20 inputs)
2. Sustainability, Ecology, Environment, Health, Energy and Mobility (18)
3. Renewal of Villages, spatial planning, using space, communities (10)
4. Quality of life and education (9)
5. Youth, women & demography (9)
6. Tourism (8)
7. Culture and cultural heritage (5)
8. Social affairs, inclusion, integration and migration (3)
9. Barrier-free – full accessibility for all (2)
10. Cooperation and multi-sectoral approaches (2)

The full collection of all statements is available in German language. In this (English) document, we try to summarise and express the key message from all topics.

#### **Ad 1) Economy, regional supply of goods, agriculture and forestry (20 inputs)**

To ensure enough energy for the future, the regional economy and agriculture needs a strong focus on regional handicraft and food. We have to save and create jobs through innovation and tradition. Spatial planning, supporting the full chain from raw production to marketing activities and selling platforms, are mandatory to enhance development and local business. We have to develop regional brands and foster regional identity.

The big change in the structure of agriculture and forestry as well as the change in new businesses has to be managed through optimised and well connected business locations which will enable creative industries and motivate young intelligent people to stay in "their" region. The regions have to discover talents and support them in their development and in the development of new products. Rural areas need excellent interfaces between regional employers and (young) people and to motivate local actors starting up with new business ideas and enterprises. A better structure and more public funding are necessary to enhance research and development dislocated points in rural areas.

#### **Ad 2) Sustainability, Ecology, Environment, Health, Energy and Mobility**

Sustainability, living and acting economically in an ecologic way, will be the key issue for the future. We have to protect and develop nature and our nature parks, our cultural landscape and respect the international charters of land and forests. Actors in these fields should start a stronger cooperation between themselves and in correlations with public institutions like municipalities, managing authorities etc.

Special focus is needed on all themes relating to water, from saving our drinking-water reserves to the usage of water for leisure projects and tourism.

We have to support our ecologic acting economy and give organic food priority. To ensure a "healthy" region, more cooperation between all stakeholders is needed. Fostering health-orientated living standards will be the most important basis for ensuring general high living standards.

To act ecologically also means to use ecologically produced energy and establish ecological mobility structures. "Smart" mobility will include all affairs in the mobility of the future and include citizens who are living in rural boarder-regions.

We need an open and honest food production which is healthy for humans and animals and packaged into unproblematic materials. We need sensitisation for nature and a way of life close to nature. This has to include the awareness of biodiversity, supporting regional products and taste-education with our youngest citizens.

#### **Ad 3) Renewal of Villages, spatial planning, using space, communities**

We have to think about alternative housing options for young people (across generations, generational justice, city centre ...), strengthen and revitalise town centers, while preserving our architectural and cultural heritage. This requires a common location policy with an integrated inter-municipal spatial planning. The local natural and cultural assets must be experienced and old building renovated and used creatively within villages. For the preservation and reactivation of local centers regional recreation offers must be developed and incorporated accordingly.

Municipalities need to cooperate more sufficiently in administration; new administrative cooperation must be developed and expanded. "Functioning" communities can be recognised by coordinated and demand-driven infrastructure offers. City-country side requires intensive cooperation in the areas of regional planning, mobility and other "local partnerships".

#### **Ad 4) Quality of life and education**

Rural regions will only have a chance in the future if there are innovative programs for lifelong learning and for personal development. This requires the establishing of decentralised training nodes that offer people with limited mobility and education a chance to learn. Regional training networks need to secure the next generation of skilled workers for farms in rural areas. Education must stretch across all ages and include talent enhancement. This requires an active regional strategy for lifelong learning and the establishment of regional training opportunities.

In order to stop the rural exodus of families, a new approach of "family education" is needed. This involves targeted women education and educational models, such as Parent-child education, children's holiday programs and intergenerational learning - "learning from the grandparents". This intends to strengthen social cohesion and social problems in advance and prevent this.

#### **Ad 5) Youth, women and demography**

The biggest challenge facing rural areas will be retaining youth in a given region. Demographic change and the massive migration of young people towards urban and suburban areas is a phenomenon that affects virtually all rural areas.

Children and young people must be involved in regional development, special offers for women and young families need to be developed. There must be jobs and opportunities for young people and women.

The quality of life of young families and mothers need to be increased. This requires appropriate support structures and the construction of an "Age of competence" for all people living in rural areas.

#### **Ad 6) Tourism**

Value adding tourism means development in a sustainable way by creating interesting packages and offers. Rural areas should focus on families with children. They need to specialise and concentrate on unique selling propositions like water, mountains, nature-parks, forestry etc. Culinary tourism plays a very important role in rural tourism and needs coordination as well as promotion, quality-management and innovation. The future of tourism will be a kind of "soft tourism" and/or "eco-tourism".

It will need very strong input to add value in tourism.

#### **Ad 7) Culture and cultural heritage**

Regenerate the value of our cultural heritage and start with good suburban cooperation. Specific areas have to be developed to world-heritage-regions. Rural areas should involve active actors in art and culture into their development processes and help those creating good networks for cooperation. This will enhance a good rooted and diverse culture and tradition.

#### **Ad 8) Social affairs, inclusion, integration and migration**

Rural areas have to implement a general framework for all groups of people and need a focus on migrants and young families. Those have to be mobilised to be engaged in social projects. Projects with a social touch should be implemented as comprehensive community projects and create social innovation.

#### **Ad 9) Barrier-free – full accessibility for all**

Limited mobilisation is not only a problem for physical handicapped person. Young mothers with pushchairs, safe walkways for children on their way to school, good hiking and cycling trails etc. This is needed to enhance the living quality on the country-side.

A very important part in future will be the barrier-free access to web-applications: Good internet-connection and excellent applications for all rural people to manage their life on the countryside as tools from the managing authority and municipalities, shopping of rural products online, information platforms with rural/local content etc.

To be barrier-free also means not to be limited in exchange through national borders. This contains not only the freedom for travelling, it's also the accessibility to cross-border farmers-markets, tourism etc.

#### **Ad 10) Cooperation – multi-sectoral approach**

Modern and attractive rural areas are good in cooperating with a strong multi-sectoral approach. Each sector like agriculture, economy, social and cultural affairs etc. should cooperate in new and innovative ways. This will attract the regions and give the citizens a new rural feeling and the motivation to keep staying there.

#### **Summary of the Austrian Manifesto**

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Rural development plays an enormously important role in the general development of our beautiful country Austria. The situation is not bad here but the competition between regions and countries is strong and (young) people are much more flexible to move or relocate themselves to this place where they expect the most advantages for their life.

We apply the Latin saying: “non progredi est regredi” – not moving forward means moving backward. This means that even Austria which is a developed country on a very high rural level, need stronger efforts in making the rural areas attractive to keep traditions and culture, save the food production on a very high level and keep diversity in Austria.

With the “Manifesto” we like to declare the most important needs and establish clear vision for a successful rural future.